



216

Number of watercraft carrying invasive animals or plants into Montana discovered during 100,000 inspections in 2018.

One last (slim) chance for the Smith

Even if you didn't draw one of the 1,288 coveted Smith River permits in FWP's 2019 lottery, floating the iconic 59-mile stretch this summer is not impossible.

When permit holders cancel, their permits become available on a first-come, first-served basis. Cancellations increase when water levels drop too low (below 250 cfs, often starting in late June or early July) for boats other than kayaks and canoes to float.

Call the Smith River Information Line at (406) 454-5861 for the latest cancellations. The call line is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to noon. "If you're persistent and keep trying day after day, you can often pick up a canceled permit," says Colin Maas, manager of Smith River State Park. ■



Still possible

WILDLIFE

Squirrel-shape disco lights soar overhead

Above: A flying squirrel glows bright pink under ultraviolet lights at night. Below: Comparison of a flying squirrel pelt under normal light with the same pelt under UV light.

If you're in the forest some night this summer, shine an ultraviolet light up into the trees. You might see bright day-glo shapes gliding overhead.

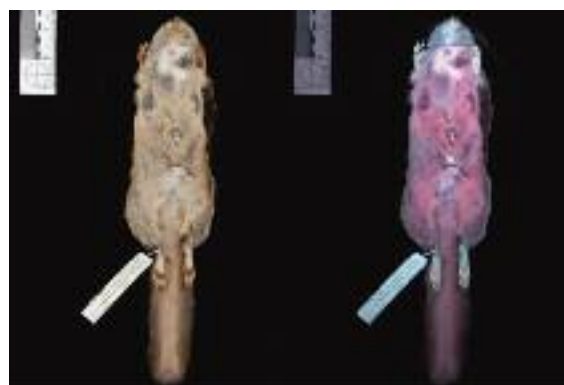
Researchers at Northland College in Wisconsin reported in the February 2019 issue of *Journal of Mammalogy* that flying squirrels turn pink under UV light. Many birds and butterflies also have UV fluorescence, but this is the first time scientists discovered it in mammals.

One theory is that the vivid pink color might have evolved to confuse great horned owls that prey on the squirrels. Because the raptors fluoresce in the same hue as flying squirrels, the squirrels might look like flying owls. Another possibility: If flying squirrels can see UV, something scientists have not yet proved, the color might be related to mating or other intra-

squirrel communication.

"It could also just be not ecologically significant to the species," Allison Kohler, who studied the squirrels while at Northland, told the *New York Times*. "It could just be a cool color that they happen to produce."

Montana's northern flying squirrels live in forested areas west of a line that stretches from Yellowstone National Park to Glacier National Park. ■



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CARTOON BY MIKE MORAN; STAN TEKELA/NATURESMART.COM; FIGURE 2.10, PAGE 67 GRAPHIC FROM BEFORE YELLOWSTONE; SHUTTERSTOCK; ALLISON KOHLER/NORTHLAND COLLEGE; ERIC HEIDLE

OUTDOOR ETIQUETTE

How to win respect at the boat ramp

Some of the most valuable real estate in Montana isn't the property ringing Whitefish Lake or Big Sky Resort. It's those concrete boat ramps at FWP fishing access sites (FASs).

That's because the ramps are the only way boaters of all kinds can get into and out of Montana's popular rivers, lakes, and reservoirs.

Power boaters and drift boat operators have long used Montana's FAS boat ramps. Now, increasing numbers of kayakers, inner tubers, and stand-up paddleboarders are using ramps. Many are unaware of the rules and etiquette.

For everyone visiting an FAS, here are seven boat ramp basics:

► Prepare your craft before launching.

When launching or retrieving, do as much preparation as possible off to the side, before you reach the ramp. Don't park on the ramp to load or unload PFDs, paddles, coolers, and other gear.

► Blow it up elsewhere.

Inflate and rig rafts, inner tubes, and blow-ups away from the ramp.

► Park in the right place.

Don't park your vehicle in areas designated for vehicles with boat trailers.

► Get a move on.

Once you're on the water, move away from the ramp. Don't linger in front of the ramp rigging rods or adjusting oars or paddles. Paddle or row downstream a bit so others can use the ramp.

► Socialize on the sidelines.

Don't block the ramp to visit with friends, take pictures, or wash off gear. Move to the side.

► Swim elsewhere.

Don't swim, wade, throw sticks for your dog, or do other things at a boat ramp that blocks boaters trying to get into or out of the water.

► Thank an angler.

Anglers, through their annual fishing license purchases, pay for most of the acquisition and maintenance of Montana's 338 fishing access sites. ■



An illustration from *Before Yellowstone* compares the size of the larger ancient bison with a contemporary American bison and a human.

Pre-park Yellowstone

Occasionally a book crosses our desk that we need to recommend. In this case it's *Before Yellowstone: Native American Archaeology in the National Park*, by University of Montana professor of anthropology Douglas H. MacDonald.

For fans of Yellowstone National Park—and who isn't?—this fascinating book tells the story of human habitation in the region before European exploration and eventual designation as the world's first national park.

Starting at the end of the last ice age, the region was home to Paleo-Indians and then Shoshone, Bannock, Salish, and Nez Perce tribes, among others. MacDonald and his team of students scoured the park to document evidence of these first inhabitants: tipi rings, campsites, atlatl dart tips and arrowheads, petroglyphs, fasting beds, and hunting blinds.

The book includes details of the Clovis spear head discoveries, including those near Yellowstone Lake that proved humans reached the area 11,000 years ago. ■

